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# General Assembly

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*Official Records*

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New York

*President*: Mr. Essy . . . . . (Côte D'Ivoire)

*In the absence of the President, Mr. Píriz Ballón (Uruguay), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.*

**Floods in Egypt**

**The President** (*interpretation from Spanish*): I wish to express, on behalf of all the members of the General Assembly, our deepest sympathy and condolences to the Government and people of Egypt at the loss of life and extensive material damage that have resulted from the floods which have recently occurred in that country.

May I also express the hope that the international community will respond promptly and generously to requests for aid to deal with the effects of this disaster.

I now call on the Permanent Representative of Egypt to the United Nations.

**Mr. Elaraby** (Egypt) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Thank you, Mr. President. The delegation of Egypt wishes to convey to you its sincerest thanks for the condolences that you extended on the occasion of the disasters that afflicted my country since 3 November 1994. The delegation of Egypt also wishes to express its appreciation for the expressions of sympathy and the condolences extended by the members of the international community.

Egypt has suffered sudden flooding from torrential rains following abrupt climatic changes. This has resulted in great loss of life and extensive material damage in the south of Egypt. The flooding caused damage to oil tanks, which caught fire and increased the number of victims. A state of emergency was declared in the country to rescue the victims and to provide assistance to the flooded areas in upper Egypt. The preliminary reports put the number of victims at more than 500 people. A plan has been prepared to set up special camps for those who have lost their homes through flooding or fire, and a health and medical plan has been put in place. This included the provision of means of transportation to hospitals and medical centres.

The competent authorities are continuing to estimate the number of victims and to assess the extent of material damage in order to provide the necessary compensation to the victims.

The Egyptian delegation would like to take this opportunity to express its appreciation to all the States, delegations and international agencies that have provided emergency assistance. This clearly reflects their solidarity with the people of Egypt and encourages us to continue to struggle to rebuild the flooded areas.

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**Agenda item 89 *(continued)***

**Environment and sustainable development**

**(e) Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States**

**Report of the Conference (A/CONF.167/9 and Corr.1 and Corr.2)**

**Report of the Secretary-General (A/49/425 and Add.1)**

**Notes by the Secretary-General transmitting the reports of the United Nations Development Programme (A/49/414 and A/49/459)**

**The President** (*interpretation from Spanish*): Members will recall that at its 30th plenary meeting, held on 13 October 1994, the General Assembly decided to hold the debate on sub-item (e) of item 89 directly in plenary meeting, on the understanding that action on the sub-item would be taken in the Second Committee.

In connection with this sub-item, the Assembly has before it the report of the Conference (A/CONF.167/9), the report of the Secretary-General on action taken to implement the Programme of Action adopted by the Conference (A/49/425 and Add.1), and two notes by the Secretary-General: one transmitting the feasibility study by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on a small island developing States network (A/49/414), and the other transmitting the feasibility study, also by UNDP, on a small island developing States technical assistance programme (A/49/459).

I should like to propose that, if there is no objection, the list of speakers in the debate on this sub-item be closed today at 11 a.m.

*It was so decided.*

**The President** (*interpretation from Spanish*): I therefore request those representatives wishing to participate in the debate to inscribe their names on the list of speakers as soon as possible.

**Mr. Lamamra** (Algeria) (*interpretation from French*): It is with great emotion, Mr. President, that I associate myself and the Algerian delegation with the condolences you expressed to the delegation of Egypt on the terrible, cruel losses that the brotherly Egyptian people have suffered as a result of the flooding that occurred on 3 November last. As soon as news of the catastrophe reached me, the Algerian Government took measures to send emergency assistance to Egypt immediately to help alleviate the suffering of the victims. The delegations of the countries that are members of the Group of 77 and the delegation of China, on whose behalf I am speaking, pay tribute to the memory of the victims and express their heartfelt sympathy to the bereaved families and to the people and Government of Egypt.

Six months after the adoption of the Programme of Action by the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, which met from 25 April to 6 May 1994 in Bridgetown on the basis of proposals presented by the Group of 77, the General Assembly today has before it results that represent the sum total of the efforts exerted during three preparatory meetings and the intensive and constructive negotiations held in Barbados.

The Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States had its origins in chapter 17 of Agenda 21 and was convened in accordance with General Assembly resolution 47/189. It was the first conference of its type in the area of sustainable development and therefore was an important step in the follow-up to and implementation of the decisions of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED).

The specific commitment of the international community to the development of small island States emerged from the awareness that these States represent a specific case from the point of view both of the environment and development and of their specific characteristics, which include the fragility of their ecosystems, their small size, their limited resources, their geographical dispersion and their distance from world markets. These are handicaps that, *inter alia*, limit these States' opportunities for the kind of economic and social development that would be in keeping with the particular characteristics of their natural and environmental surroundings.

The Barbados Declaration and the Programme of Action adopted by the Conference, by formally ratifying the international community's recognition of the specific needs of the small island developing States, constitute indispensable instruments that set forward the objectives to be fulfilled and the practical measures to be implemented in order to achieve sustainable development in those countries. These two documents lay the groundwork for the systematic follow-up to UNCED, and in particular of section G of chapter 17 of Agenda 21, which deals with the development of small island States.

The Barbados Programme of Action thus defines 14 priority areas and recommends a logical set of measures to be taken and policies to be formulated in the short, medium and long term by the small island States themselves, with the consistent support of the international community.

In this context, it is clear that the specific commitment of the small island States to the implementation of the objectives of the Programme of Action will be a decisive element in the implementation of and follow-up to the Barbados Conference.

During the second summit meeting of the Alliance of Small Island States, held on 4 May 1994 concurrently with the Bridgetown Conference, political leaders at the highest level reaffirmed

> "their commitment to the decisions of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and their determination to pursue and to formulate policies to promote sustainable development".

They also expressed

> "their firm commitment to taking the necessary action on the national, regional and international levels to ensure the implementation of the Programme of Action".

But while it is clear that the specific implementation of the Programme of Action is the primary responsibility of the small island States, it goes without saying that the efforts of these countries cannot in and of themselves lead to the fulfilment of the tasks identified in the 14 priority areas. The support of the international community as a whole, including the United Nations system, is critical to this. The international community's areas and means of intervention, as defined by the Conference's Programme of Action, are contingent on the mobilization of adequate new and additional resources, the transfer of and access to technologies adapted to specific local conditions, and the establishment of appropriate institutional follow-up machinery, particularly at the international level.

In that context, the delegations on whose behalf I have the honour to speak are particularly interested in paragraph 123 of the Programme of Action, relating to the follow-up to the Conference by the United Nations Secretariat and, more specifically, the establishment within the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development of a "clearly identifiable, qualified and competent entity" *(A/49/425, para. 139)* that would be put in place to provide secretariat support for both intergovernmental and inter-agency coordination mechanisms.

In the same spirit, I am pleased to express our appreciation to the United Nations Development Programme for the professionalism and speed with which it responded, in the agreed time limit, to the invitation extended to it under paragraphs 105 and 106 of the Programme of Action to carry out two feasibility studies dealing, respectively, with the establishment of an information network of small island developing States and with a technical assistance programme designed to promote intra- and inter-regional cooperation.

The motto of the Barbados Conference was "Small States, Large Questions". It achieved significant results and thereby inspired great hopes. While the stakes of the States involved are high, their partners in action have to make only relatively modest efforts. The international community as a whole must reaffirm the vitality and viability of the commitments made in Rio and effectively implement Agenda 21.

For all those reasons, the delegations of the States members of the Group of 77 and the delegation of China strongly recommend that the General Assembly endorse the Barbados Declaration and Programme of Action.

**Mr. Henze** (Germany): I have the honour of speaking on behalf of the European Union and Austria.

First of all, I should like to join the President in expressing our condolences on the heavy loss of life which Egypt has suffered as a result of the flooding there. We are all fully aware that this disaster will be a serious setback for the development efforts of the Egyptian Government.

Pushing ahead with the programme of global partnership for environment and development initiated at Rio more than two years ago represents one of the major challenges the international community will be facing in the future in order to secure and maintain global peace and stability. In the framework of this long-term process, which, *inter alia*, involves a totally new quality of cooperation between industrialized and developing countries, quite a lot has already been achieved. In fact, in adopting the Declaration of Barbados and the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States within the framework of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of

Small Island Developing States, which was successfully concluded in May of this year, the international community has taken an important step towards the implementation of the commitments of Rio and the principles of Agenda 21.

A coherent strategy providing a framework of action for the different players involved at the national, regional and international levels has been agreed upon. It takes into account the main development constraints of the small island developing States and addresses the key issues in 14 cross-sectoral and sectoral priority areas related to the countries' future development. In the view of the European Union, there is a realistic hope that the Programme of Action as agreed at the Barbados Conference will assist the small island developing States on the path of sustainable development by, *inter alia*, enhancing their international competitiveness and reducing their economic instability and ecological fragility.

This optimism is based primarily on the fact that the Programme that has been agreed upon is based on a conceptually sound approach that takes account of the principles of self-reliance and subsidiarity and recognizes both the importance of capacity-building and regional cooperation and the role of the private sector and non-governmental organizations in the implementation of the Programme.

Cautious optimism also seems to be justified in regard to the implementation of the Programme of Action. Although at the present stage a definitive evaluation is not possible, owing to the short time that has elapsed since the Barbados Conference, the Secretary-General's report on action taken to implement the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States clearly indicates that the United Nations organizations and agencies are in the process of reorienting their development plans and programmes and of setting up adequate institutional arrangements in order to implement the strategy.

In this context, I should also like to mention the initiative of the Alliance of Small Island States aimed at reducing greenhouse emissions until the year 2005 to the level of 1990 — an initiative which will be considered within the Framework Convention on Climate Change.

The European Union has given particular attention to the development needs and efforts of the small island developing States and strongly supported the negotiation process leading to the Barbados Conference. Substantial financial and technical support is being provided both within the framework of the European Union and by its member States. The European Union's multilateral assistance is managed by the European Commission and channelled mainly through the Lomé Convention, which states in its articles 335 to 337 that the African, Caribbean and Pacific island developing States are in special need of cooperation. Lomé IV allocates an amount of nearly 620 million ECUs to this group of States in the 1990 to 1995 period — the equivalent of approximately $775 million.

I should like to take this opportunity to express once again the European Union's and its member States' firm commitment to the effective implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States agreed in Barbados.

Based on this framework, in the years to come our actions will — even more than in the past — take into account the small island developing States' specific development constraints; our assistance will be environmentally as well as poverty oriented with a special focus on the group of the least developed countries. Special emphasis will also be placed on strengthening regional cooperation and integration with the aim of improving the small island developing States' external sector performance, reducing development constraints in the transport and communications sectors and enhancing common actions to protect the countries from disasters and global hazards.

In fact, a reliable and lasting commitment on the part of all the parties involved is an indispensable prerequisite for maintaining the dynamics of the process upon which the international community has embarked.

Moreover, the success of the Barbados Conference will in the long run largely depend on the extent to which the impact and the benefit of the available resources can be maximized by improved regional cooperation and donor coordination; we believe that there is considerable room for this.

Finally, with regard to the effective implementation of the Programme of Action we are confident that the Commission on Sustainable Development will play a positive role in monitoring and reviewing the steps taken and the progress achieved in implementing the Programme of Action on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

**Mr. Cheltenham** (Barbados): The delegations of CARICOM wish to join the Chairman of the Group of 77 in expressing sympathy to the people of Egypt following the tragic losses suffered in the recent disaster.

I have the honour to address this Assembly on behalf of the 12 States Members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) that are members of the United Nations, namely: Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, and my own country, Barbados, on agenda item 89 (e), entitled Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

In April this year, Barbados was privileged to host the first ever United Nations Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. The occasion brought to our shores high-level delegations from some 116 countries and 150 non-governmental organizations, as well as representatives from the development sectors and operational agencies of the United Nations system. The Conference was significant in two important ways. It was the first comprehensive follow-up process to the Rio Summit to fulfil its mandate, and it marked the first time that a fully fledged United Nations Conference had been held in such a small Member State.

Needless to say, the event represented an unprecedented financial and logistical challenge to the host country. In this regard, Barbados is grateful to its CARICOM partners, and to the wider community of island nations, for their assistance and solidarity, and to the members of the international community for their encouragement and support. We wish also to pay special tribute to the dedicated team of United Nations and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) personnel whose professional expertise and guidance contributed significantly to a successful outcome.

The CARICOM Member States wish to associate themselves fully with the remarks made earlier by the delegation of Algeria, speaking on behalf of the Group of 77. The Rio process represented the international community's clear recognition of the urgent need to achieve a balanced and integrated approach to environment and development, in order to forge a global partnership for sustainable development. The process which began in Barbados represents the efforts of a specific group of countries — small island developing States — with a commonality of characteristics, interests and vulnerabilities, to translate the Rio ethic into reality in response to their special circumstances. It demonstrates their solemn commitment to work together in a self-reliant and cooperative manner towards the goal of sustainable development, and their hopes for a supportive international environment to enable them to achieve that goal.

The two main outcomes of the Global Conference — the Declaration of Barbados and the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States — have been brought before the General Assembly for its approval in document A/CONF.167/9. The States Members of CARICOM urge the international community to give them its full endorsement, and to set clear targets for the implementation of the important activities detailed in the 14 substantive chapters of the Programme of Action. That document provides us with a unique opportunity to create an effective model for system-wide United Nations coordination to achieve a concrete set of actions. For this to be possible, however, it is vital that the United Nations Secretariat, through its Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development, be equipped to fulfil the monitoring and coordination mandate assigned to it in detail in paragraph 123 of the Programme of Action.

The provision of a well-staffed Secretariat support structure dedicated to the follow-up of the outcomes of the Conference is an indispensable component of the implementation strategy. It is of crucial importance that this point be carefully and comprehensively addressed by the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly. While we reiterate our disappointment at the inconclusive and inadequate proposals presented to the Conference on this subject, we are heartened by the intention of the Secretariat, as indicated at paragraph 140 of the Secretary-General's report, to reconsider its preliminary response in the light of the concerns expressed in Barbados. We look forward to analysing its new proposal in the near future. We confidently expect that proposal to take into account the demonstrated institutional requirements at Headquarters, and in the field through the sub-regional offices of the regional Economic Commissions. It should also respond to paragraph 127, regarding the strengthening of the analytical and research capacity of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) to carry out its preliminary mandate in the context of the implementation of the Programme of Action.

In order for effective implementation of the outcomes of the Conference to be possible, the institutional structure envisaged within the Secretariat must of necessity be accompanied by a complementary response capacity within the relevant operational organizations and programmes of the United Nations system. The CARICOM Member States welcome the information provided by the Report of the Secretary General (A/49/425 and Add.1). In this regard we commend the prompt action taken by many of the development agencies to integrate the relevant elements of the Barbados Programme of Action into their broader programmes, as well as to begin the process of developing specific plans and programmes to implement several aspects of the Programme of Action.

We note also the positive response by several of the agencies to the proposal made in the Programme of Action for the establishment of focal points to coordinate the implementation effort. We look forward to receiving details on the identity and location of the various focal points and to developing a close working relationship with them in pursuit of our common objective.

In the Caribbean, regional arrangements and institutions have long played an important role in our development effort. The emphasis given to regional involvement in the implementation of the Programme of Action is therefore, in our view, well placed. We anticipate the active participation of the relevant United Nations and intergovernmental regional and subregional organizations in this effort.

The Programme of Action assigns a central role to the Commission on Sustainable Development in the intergovernmental monitoring and follow-up of the implementation of the outcomes of the Conference. For reasons of timing, the question could be treated only in an ad hoc manner at this year's session of the Commission on Sustainable Development. We fully expect, however, that by the third session adequate arrangements will be in place for monitoring and reviewing, in a distinct and identifiable manner, relevant progress made in the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action. The Commission will no doubt have a deep interest in reviewing the national, regional and international attempts to give practical application to the decisions of Rio in an islands context, where an accurate ongoing assessment of progress is relatively simple to achieve.

CARICOM Governments are well aware that an effective United Nations response to the Conference mandates can be achieved only through close inter-agency collaboration. We are confident that the mechanism of the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development will be fully exploited to ensure well coordinated implementation of the Programme of Action throughout the United Nations system.

The Assembly has before it for consideration two further reports (A/49/414 and A/49/459), both prepared by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in response to a specific mandate from the Conference. We are greatly encouraged by the prompt and enthusiastic response of UNDP to the mandate entrusted to it, and look forward to working closely with UNDP and our partners in the international community to translate the useful elements of the two feasibility studies into viable activities in support of the wider implementation of the Programme of Action.

As envisaged in that Programme, the Small Island Developing States Information Network (SIDS/NET) and the Small Island Developing States Technical Assistance Programme (SIDS/TAP) are complementary activities intended to encourage the exchange of experience and promote interregional and intraregional cooperation on sustainable development among small island developing States. They should be viewed not as an end in themselves, but rather as important facilitators which, if carefully developed, could equip the islands with the capacity to respond to the substantive priorities so clearly enumerated in the Programme of Action.

The States members of CARICOM participated at the expert level in one of the two regional workshops held to consult on the design and scope of SIDS/TAP. Our Governments believe that the use of the modality of technical cooperation among developing countries is appropriate in this regard, and are supportive of the view articulated in the study that SIDS/TAP must be viewed as a complement to, and not as a substitute for, existing technical-assistance programmes. We see the development of a comprehensive directory of capacities and expertise in the sustainable development of small island developing States as a crucial prerequisite in any attempt to make SIDS/TAP operational. We are heartened by the willingness of UNDP to take immediate steps to attend to this need within its information referral system (INRES) programme.

SIDS/NET is an exciting and innovative concept which has the potential, through the promotion of exchanges of data, information and experiences among small island developing States, to counter the

disadvantages of size and remoteness. Likewise, it can serve as an important catalyst for forging closer inter-island collaboration among all stakeholders in island societies, on a variety of priority issues and shared concerns relating to their sustainable development. SIDS/NET, in conjunction with SIDS/TAP, is an invaluable tool for addressing the substantive actions proposed in the Programme of Action.

We hope that ongoing consultations among all interested parties on the UNDP feasibility study will produce early agreement on the final scope, modalities and funding for this important project. In this context, CARICOM countries wish to stress that, beyond the goal of providing connectivity to enable small island developing States to access existing global networks and databases, the single most important component of SIDS/NET remains the development of capacity within the islands themselves to be the primary generators of information for the network. While it is clearly important for small island developing States to be able to benefit from access to up-to-date global sources of knowledge, the full potential of SIDS/NET would not be realized if this were to be the only result. The information component of SIDS/NET must be predominantly driven by small island developing States if the vast indigenous knowledge base of these States is to be effectively harnessed to their common benefit. We are confident that there is scope to address this critical element in a cost-effective manner within the training, staffing and marketing components of the project and through the careful design of the menus of the eventual SIDS/NET. To this end, a comprehensive consultation should be held in the start-up phase of the project. This consultation should involve the relevant expertise from small island developing States, and should aim at establishing priorities and modalities for the systematic compilation, generation and dissemination, by and among small island developing States themselves, of material relevant to their sustainable-development goals.

A welcome feature of the Global Conference was the effective advocacy and support role played by a significant number of non-governmental organizations. The Conference process served as an important catalyst in forging alliances between island non-governmental organizations from different regions, which had not previously had the opportunity for interaction. It also provided fertile ground for the development of a valuable partnership between northern and southern non-governmental organizations in addressing sustainable-development issues in an islands context. Through this interaction, many useful proposals were produced which we are confident will now be further developed for implementation. The CARICOM delegations look forward to the continued cooperation and support of the community of non-governmental organizations in the implementation of the Conference outcomes.

The Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States was modest in design, practical in arrangements and focused in objectives. While it may not have captured international headlines, the Conference quietly and painstakingly laid the groundwork for an irreversible process of national, regional, intra-regional and international cooperation in support of the sustainable-development efforts of small island developing States. The CARICOM Governments are greatly encouraged by the level of understanding the process has generated for the special circumstances and economic and ecological vulnerabilities of small island developing States. The Programme of Action provides a practical means of translating that understanding into a collective response. For the members of the Caribbean Community, and of the community of islands everywhere, the process has served to deepen the bonds which islanders intuitively share, and has strengthened our resolve to work together in pursuit of our shared development aspirations. We are confident that our efforts will be matched by a significant demonstration of commitment by the international community as we finalize our strategy for the implementation of the important outcomes of the Barbados Conference.

**Mr. Palsson** (Iceland): Let me at the outset associate myself with the condolences that have been expressed to the victims of the disastrous floods, tragic events, in Egypt last week.

Speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries, I wish to say that the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, held in Barbados earlier this year, represented an important step in the implementation of the results of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

The main accomplishment of the Barbados Conference was the adoption of a Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. The Programme is both ambitious and comprehensive, and focuses on practical steps at the national, regional and international levels to address crucial environmental and development concerns of small island developing States.

The Conference also adopted an important Declaration — the Barbados Declaration. It spells out the respective political commitments of small island developing States and of the world community, and highlights the importance of public and private partnership as well as of regional and international co-operation for the sustainable development of small island developing States.

The Programme of Action identifies realistic means and measures for increasing the capacity of small island developing States to cope effectively with their environment and development problems. It underscores the role and importance of major groups, non-governmental organizations and the private sector in the promotion of sustainable development. Moreover, it identifies important global objectives and measures to ensure that the global environment and economic circumstances will in the future be conducive to the sustainable development of small island developing States.

The Programme of Action offers the States concerned a tangible instrument for pursuing sustainable development at the national and regional levels. It also provides donors and relevant organizations with a framework to assist them in ensuring that their contributions contribute to strengthening the capability of small island developing States to deal effectively with their environmental and development challenges.

Effective implementation of the Programme of Action at all levels — national, regional and international — is not only important for the small island developing States, but also imperative for the global community. Let us bear in mind that it is not the size of a country or its wealth which determines its contribution to the conservation of our global environment. With the entry into force of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, small island developing States bear responsibility for a large part of the world's oceans, and thus will play a pivotal role in the conservation of the Earth's biological diversity.

**Mr. Yadav** (India): I am happy to address the Assembly today, when we have to some extent achieved one of the objectives that we set for ourselves at Rio. Along with the establishment of the Commission on Sustainable Development and the successful conclusion of the negotiations on the elaboration of a Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, the agreement on the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States is a matter of satisfaction.

India was among the countries that participated actively in the process leading up to the elaboration of the Programme of Action and in a very successful meeting that took place in the serene environment of the beautiful island of Barbados. The Indian delegation to the Conference was led by the Lieutenant-Governor of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, an island territory of my country. This island chain comprises almost 300 islands, with a population of about 300,000 people. It embodies some of the experiences relevant to the problems of ecological fragility and economic difficulties being faced by the small island developing States.

The Programme of Action adopted at Barbados appropriately recognized that small island developing States and also islands supporting small communities would require special programmes and approaches appropriate to their special situations, problems and needs if we are to effectively tackle the question of their environment and development. They embody a unique and peculiar combination of vulnerability to ecological fragility, natural disasters and the vagaries of the international economic situation. The small size of their populations, resource base and market, their relative geographic isolation and wide differences in ecological and geographical characteristics hinder their ability to embark on self-sustaining development.

Although my own country is a large, subcontinental land mass, we ourselves have some experience of the problems faced by small islands supporting small and isolated communities. Some of these islands are geographically distant from the mainland. To tackle their special problems, the Government of India has in fact set up an Island Development Authority, under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister himself. This is ample proof of the importance that we attach to the particular problems of small islands. The Authority has been mandated with the task of formulating policies and programmes for the ecologically sound, suitable and integrated development of the relatively remote islands sustaining small communities.

Our approach to the sustainable development of these islands, *inter alia*, involved programmes for maintenance, regeneration and restoration of the ecosystem. We have pursued this in the belief that degradation of the ecosystem not only further impoverishes the poor, but also affects the ability of the environment to remain productive. Programmes for regeneration, on the other hand, aside from restoring productive potential, also provide employment to large

sections of the rural people and local communities. In our own experience, we have found that the creation of jobs for ecological restoration often has relatively few requirements, and the investment can often be marginal, with significant returns.

We have also found in our experience that, in regeneration and ensuring sustainable use of natural resources, decentralization and involvement of local communities have been a more effective way of managing the process. This, in turn, has required the creation of appropriate local bodies and institutional structures. These local bodies and communities also need to have access to information and professional knowledge so as to be able to call upon technical bodies, when required, for appropriate advice and support. In this context, human-resource development and administrative capacity-building become significant.

The development of relevant and effective science and technology and their application to the sustainable use and development of the ecosystem require an interactive process between the scientific community and the final user. Often, advances in the scientific understanding of nature and natural processes have not been shared or generated in partnership with the people, especially the rural, tribal or isolated communities. It is now widely recognized and appreciated that most of these communities have their own traditional wisdom and practices on these matters. There is an imperative need for the enrichment that would follow from the synthesis of these two streams of knowledge.

It will be quite clear from the broad outline that I have just delineated regarding our approach to and experience with the problems of small island communities that in the case of small island developing States the question of mitigating and reducing the impact of natural and environmental disasters, the management of wastes, coastal and marine resources, freshwater resources, land and energy resources and so on would all need to be pursued in an integrated manner. These efforts, in turn, would have to be supported through the development of enabling national institutions and administrative capacity, human-resource development, science and technology and technical cooperation, as well as a clear and manifest international recognition of the obligation of partnership for global sustainable and sustained development. In particular, we feel that the questions of science and technology and finance need to be tackled on a priority basis.

There is a clear need for investment in the development of technologies that can be applied on a small scale. These could be used for the development and utilization of renewable energy sources, the tapping of fresh water, and the provision of building materials and other resources. The developed countries and the transnational corporations have invested considerable amounts in science and technology. However, not enough attention has been paid to technology that would sustain small or not-so-rich communities, even though it may not have significant immediate spin-offs in terms of market-determined profits. It may be well worth our while to consider in what manner incentives can be given to those who have the capability of engaging their efforts in the development of appropriate technology.

Technical and economic cooperation among developing countries (TCDC and ECDC) will also be an important mechanism for the transfer and development of appropriate technology and the exchange of experience. Often, this has suffered in the past owing to a lack of adequate funds. The international community must also consider in what way it can facilitate ECDC and TCDC, keeping in mind the requirements of the small island developing States, as well as the experience of other countries in tackling the problems of islands supporting small communities. India, through its International Technical and Economic Cooperation Programmes, has been sharing its experience and technical know-how with other developing countries.

We also feel that small island developing States require not just periodic infusions of assistance or technology, but their integration into a system which ensures self-sustaining interactions for technological advancement, economic growth, trade earnings and a reduced vulnerability to natural and economic uncertainties. Some steps will therefore have to be taken to ensure that these States' terms of trade do not decline, market access for their products is assured, service industries are well developed, and appropriate insurance schemes are made available. Their integration into the global economic system, while ensuring self-sustaining development, is the real challenge before us.

**Mrs. des Iles** (Trinidad and Tobago): I have the honour of addressing the General Assembly on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS). In doing so, I should like to join the President and earlier speakers in conveying the condolences and sympathy of the members of the Alliance of Small Island States to the Government and people of Egypt on the loss of life and the destruction caused by the recent floods.

I should like to associate myself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Algeria, speaking on behalf of the Group of 77, and I would also at the outset express, on behalf of AOSIS, our deep gratitude and appreciation for the support and solidarity we have received from the Group of 77.

The first Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States was successfully concluded in Barbados on 6 May 1994. We are greatly indebted to the Government and people of Barbados for the effective support and facilities provided for the Conference. I also wish to pay a special tribute to Ms. Penelope Wensley of Australia for successfully guiding the work of the Preparatory Committee and the Main Committee, which proposed the Programme of Action for final adoption.

The fragility of island ecosystems and the vulnerability of our small economies to natural disasters and external factors were recognized by the international community at the highest level during the 1992 Conference on Environment and Development. Chapter 17, section G of Agenda 21 and the subsequent enabling resolution of the General Assembly represented the first steps in giving effect to the determination to address the sustainable development needs of small islands. We now welcome the report of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, (A/CONF.167/9 and Corrs. 1 and 2) and the report of the Secretary-General on "Action taken by the organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system to implement the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States" (A/49/425). The Alliance of Small Island States also wishes to express its appreciation to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for the prompt and timely submission of the two studies which were requested in the Programme of Action. However, we would be less than honest if we did not at the same time express our disappointment that the United Nations Secretariat did not find it possible to act with similar dispatch in the processing and circulation of the UNDP studies.

The Barbados Conference was an opportunity for States to recommit themselves to the full implementation of the Rio Agreements while focusing on a sustainable-development strategy for small islands within the framework of Agenda 21. The momentum gained in addressing the priority areas identified by the Conference will only be sustained if the commitments made by all parties are kept so that the Programme of Action can be transformed into concrete action through partnership between small island developing States and other members of the international community.

Small island developing States will continue to have the main responsibility for their own development and for bringing that development onto a sustainable path. In this context most of the resources for the implementation of the Programme of Action are expected to originate in small islands. This represents an immense challenge for development planning within our islands. An early assurance has been given by small island developing States at the highest levels that they are prepared to meet this new development challenge. Heads of State or Government of the Alliance of Small Island Developing States (AOSIS) who met in Barbados on 4 May 1994, re-emphasized the high priority that small island developing States place on sustainable development, particularly in light of their vulnerability to external security threats and natural disasters, their limited land mass, fragile marine and terrestrial ecosystems and economic and trade imbalances with developed countries. They also reconfirmed their commitment to the decisions of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) and their determination to pursue policies for sustainable development. Against this background the Heads of State or Government of AOSIS expressed their strong commitment to taking the necessary steps at the national, regional and international levels to ensure the implementation of the outcomes of the Barbados Conference.

It has been recognized that the implementation of the Programme of Action must be pursued at three levels. At the national level the collective efforts of Governments and all citizens and groups in society, in particular women, youth and non-governmental organizations, must be harnessed to ensure that the goals of the Programme are met. In this regard AOSIS was pleased with the level of participation of non-governmental organizations from small island developing States in the Conference. Special note has been taken of their expressed commitment to play an active part as we move from Barbados to the implementation of the Programme of Action. Other

non-governmental organizations that participated actively during the Barbados Conference also have an important role in the implementation of the Programme of Action. Mechanisms for the implementation of the Programme of Action must therefore facilitate the continued engagement of non-governmental organizations internationally.

The role of regional initiatives in the quest for sustainable development is also fully recognized by the international community. For small islands the regional approach proposed in the Programme of Action will assist in overcoming some of the constraints of small size. Regional initiatives will also strengthen cooperation among small island developing States both within and among regions.

Members of AOSIS have already taken some initiatives in the priority areas identified in the Programme of Action. However, actions taken by small islands and their strong commitment to implement the Programme of Action as a whole will not guarantee the attainment of the objectives of sustainable development in the absence of a supportive international environment. As a prerequisite for the empowerment of citizens of small islands to achieve their full potential in a suitable manner, the problems of trade, debt, transfer of technology and the outward flow of financial resources must be addressed. At the international level there is also a need for a tripartite approach involving small islands, the United Nations system and other members of the international community.

In this context members of AOSIS urge the international community to heed the call made by the Group of Eminent Persons who met in Barbados prior to the Conference to fulfil the commitments made at Rio during the International Conference on Environment and Development and to manifest a more determined attitude and approach in the process of implementing the Programme of Action. The commitments made by the international community at Rio and in Barbados constitute the foundation on which the implementation of the Programme of Action is based. Failure to honour those commitments would therefore compromise the implementation of the Programme of Action.

Members of AOSIS are pleased to note the contents of the report of the Secretary-General outlining the action taken by organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system in the six months following the Barbados Conference. We are encouraged by the action taken by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in accordance with its mandate as the lead agency in organizing United Nations-system efforts towards capacity-building at the local, national and regional levels and in fostering the collective effort of the United Nations in supporting the implementation of the Programme of Action. The feasibility study on a Small Island Developing States Technical Assistance Programme (SIDS/TAP), when implemented, will put in place an important instrument for facilitating the implementation of the Programme of Action. We are gratified that in the limited time available a practical modality was found, through the seminars convened in Fiji and Barbados, to take into account the views of small island developing States as requested in the Programme of Action. With the full implementation of SIDS/TAP, each small island developing State will be in a position to benefit from the experience and expertise of other small islands in devising strategies for addressing common problems. SIDS/TAP will not only enhance technical cooperation among small island developing States but should also promote cooperation between small island developing States and other developing countries. In addition, SIDS/TAP would allow interested parties to obtain a global picture of available expertise on matters specific to small island developing States.

The feasibility study on the Small Island Developing States Information Network (SIDS/NET) has successfully translated the concept of an information-exchange network into a concrete and practical programme to facilitate the exchange of information among small island developing States and to allow those States to obtain access to information at the international level. Members of AOSIS are of the view that the two studies should move to the implementation stage as early as possible, given the fact that both SIDS/TAP and SIDS/NET are important basic instruments for facilitating the implementation of the Programme of Action as a whole. Members of the Group are convinced that with some refinements, through technical consultations between UNDP, small island developing States and other interested members of the international community, implementation of both SIDS/TAP and SIDS/NET could commence before we celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations.

We welcome the steps taken by organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system to implement the Programme of Action. We are pleased to note that some organizations have responded positively to the recommendation in the Programme of Action to establish focal points. The task forces established by others should assist in bringing a greater focus to the

implementation of the Programme of Action. In the case of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), which has taken the decision to establish two regional sub-offices in the Caribbean and the Pacific, we agree that closer proximity at the field level should result in an improved response to the needs of the small island States served by the offices.

The Programme of Action anticipated an important role for the Regional Commissions in the follow-up to Barbados. We have therefore taken careful note of ongoing projects which address some elements in the Programme of Action. The four Regional Commissions are urged to speed up their review processes so that they can concretize their support in the follow-up process. We continue to be of the view that the Regional Commissions should be provided with the resources necessary to undertake the activities requested in the Programme of Action. In this regard we continue to support the strengthening of the Economic Commission for Africa, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) Pacific Operations Centre and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean.

One of the areas which received intense scrutiny during the Conference was the Secretariat support structure which must be put in place to facilitate the effective follow-up to the Conference. By the end of the Conference it was agreed that a clearly identifiable, qualified and competent entity within the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development should be put in place to provide Secretariat support for both intergovernmental and inter-agency coordination mechanisms.

There was also clear agreement on the broad functions of the Secretariat support structure. It must provide substantive Secretariat support to intergovernmental and inter-agency processes relating to the monitoring, review and coordination of the implementation of the Programme of Action; it must act as a liaison and focal point for Governments, organs, programmes and agencies of the United Nations system, as well as for other relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, on matters related to the follow-up to the Conference and the implementation of the Programme of Action; it must prepare reports to be submitted to the Commission on Sustainable Development and other relevant bodies on the implementation of the Programme of Action, drawing on input from all appropriate sources; and it must provide support, as appropriate, to other activities emanating from the Programme of Action. Decisive action must now be taken to provide adequate resources to carry out these important functions.

The support of the United Nations Secretariat is critical to the overall implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action. Consequently, any deviation from the consensus arrived at in Barbados would, in our view, compromise the effective follow-up to Barbados. While the tasks of the entity will be many and demanding, and will include the promotion of the Programme of Action while at the same time reaching out to small island developing States, no elaborate structure has been requested. Rather, we anticipate a limited number of professionals whose collegiality, excellence and professionalism will match the challenge. It is also anticipated that while the entity should be identifiable, it will not operate in isolation: there should be an ongoing process of mutual reinforcement of information and expertise between the small islands entity and the rest of the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development in the overall work of the Department.

The Programme of Action represents the first comprehensive strategy for sustainable development in the process of putting Agenda 21 into effect. Given its comprehensive approach, its implementation represents a litmus test of the challenges and opportunities associated with such a strategy. The benefits should therefore be global, while the relative cost to the international community is modest. Member States must reaffirm the agreements arrived at in Barbados and fulfil the commitments made. This debate in the General Assembly presents the opportunity to take these steps. We look forward to the support of Member States for the draft resolution which will be submitted by the Group of 77 on the follow-up to the Conference.

**Mr. Wang Xue Xian** (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): The Chinese delegation wishes to express its deep sympathy and condolences to the people and the Government of Egypt on the losses suffered as a result of the floods in that country. We hope that, through the activities of the Egyptian Government and with the support of the international community, the victims of the floods will soon be able to reconstruct their homeland.

The Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, held in Barbados in late April and early May this year, was an important follow-up to the Rio Conference. The Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the Conference recognize the unique features and needs of

small island developing countries in respect of their economic development and environmental protection. Those two instruments also call on the international community, especially developed countries and relevant international agencies, to provide necessary financial resources and technologies in such areas as reduction of natural disasters, coastal management, energy, and biological diversity, with a view to helping small island developing countries overcome difficulties and achieve sustainable development. We believe the actual implementation of these instruments will play an important role in promoting the sustainable development of small island developing countries.

Small in size and geographically dispersed, small island developing countries are confronted with such common problems as a paucity of natural resources, inconvenience in transportation, lack of economic diversity and a high degree of dependence on foreign capital and trade. A large number of them are among the least developed countries. To make matters worse, they are also faced with such environmental problems as ecological fragility, global warming, rising sea level, and marine and coastal pollution and are vulnerable to the effects of natural disasters. All these factors have seriously constrained their efforts to sustain their development.

The sustainable development of small island countries is inseparable from that of developing countries and the world at large. It is worth emphasizing that the salient features of the historical background, geographical location, economic development and biological environment of small island countries show that many problems they have to face in their economic development and environmental protection are not of their own making. Nor can they be solved by these countries alone. Therefore, while their own efforts are required in achieving sustainable development, international support is also indispensable. The international community should attach importance to the issue of the sustainable development of small island developing countries, and developed countries in particular have unshirkable responsibilities in this respect.

The sustainable development of small island developing countries requires a stable and favourable external environment. However, owing to the fact that developed countries have so far failed to fulfil the commitments they undertook at the Rio Conference in terms of provision of capital and transfer of technology and of furnishing the financial resources for implementing the Programme of Action, the small island developing countries still face difficulties in their pursuit of sustainable development. We are of the view that the primary task now is to implement the relevant resolutions and fulfil the commitments already undertaken.

The international community, and especially the developed countries, should take the specific action of providing new and additional financial resources and transferring environmentally sound technologies. This is the precondition for international cooperation in environment and development, as well as a key factor in the pursuit of sustainable development in small island developing countries.

We welcome the successful conclusion and the achievements of the Barbados Conference. The Chinese Government and people sympathize with the small island developing countries, understanding their unique conditions and difficulties. We support their tireless efforts to enhance international cooperation and to find solutions to their problems. China, for its part, will actively explore various effective ways of cooperating with small island developing countries and in this way make its own contribution to the realization of their sustainable development.

**Mr. Cho** (Republic of Korea): My delegation would like to join you, Mr. President, and other representatives in expressing sympathy and condolences to the people and Government of Egypt on the disastrous losses caused by the recent flooding.

My delegation welcomes the Declaration and the Programme of Action adopted in Barbados last May. We appreciate the efforts of the United Nations system and of regional organizations towards the sustainable development of small island developing States, as well as those of Governments providing bilateral and multilateral assistance to such States.

Small island States have a unique ecosystem, with many rare and precious resources. Resource preservation in these ecosystems not only helps to provide a solid basis of income generation for the inhabitants, but also safeguards the biodiversity of the world ecosystem. This is a critical consideration, given that the destruction of the ecosystems of small island States has an irrevocably detrimental impact on the Earth's overall ecosystem.

My delegation believes that the two major threats to the ecosystems of small island States are their own internal development activities and the environmentally

unsound production and consumption activities of the outside world.

The internal factors that contribute to the destruction of the natural environment of the small island States are the overuse of natural resources needed for the basic subsistence of the people and the inadequate disposal of internally produced wastes, waste water and other hazardous materials. Even more detrimental to the environment of small island States are external, man-made factors, such as climate change. My delegation is of the view that concerted action should be taken immediately and vigorously strengthened by the international community, as well as by small island States, to prevent any possibility of future disasters. The fact that man-made damage to the environment can increase the frequency and severity of natural disasters should also be borne in mind.

Because of the scarcity of natural resources, limited land area, fragile ecosystems and other unfavourable economic and environmental conditions that characterize small island States, these countries have encountered difficulties in their efforts to achieve sustainable development. Given these limitations, special assistance from the international community is needed to address the distinctive sustainable development problems of small island developing States. My delegation would like to point out that in the course of the negotiations that resulted in the Programme of Action there was considerable discussion on the section entitled "Implementation, Monitoring and Review". My delegation believes that for the effective implementation of the Programme of Action human resources development should be given the highest priority.

Human resources development can enhance the utility of limited natural resources — a fact that has been substantiated in many industrialized countries possessing neither a significant quantity nor a significant variety of natural resources to support their current production and consumption levels. Human resources development in the small island States can contribute to the effective and diversified use of those States' own natural resources in a sustainable manner, leading to the achievement of a diversified production structure and sound management of the environment through reduced production of waste. My delegation believes that the principal reason for emphasizing the importance of human resource development is that achieving the long-term, sustainable development of the small island States depends ultimately upon the residents of those States themselves.

The Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States is the first work plan to be elaborated in order to implement the relevant section of Agenda 21. We hope that the commitments made at Barbados will be carried out faithfully thus giving renewed momentum for the implementation of other programme areas of Agenda 21.

**Mr. Butler** (Australia): I should like to begin by expressing to the delegation of Egypt my own delegation's profound sympathy following the heavy losses suffered by the Egyptian people as a result of the recent heavy flooding.

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the nine States members of the South Pacific Forum that are also Members of the United Nations: Fiji, Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and my own country, Australia.

The outcomes of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States are an important achievement. Securing agreement on the Declaration of Barbados and the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States was a significant achievement. But it also has a deeper meaning. It would not have been possible without the commitment of the small island developing countries to ensuring that sustainable development would be a cornerstone of their future.

We express our gratitude and congratulations to the Government and the people of Barbados for the excellent arrangements made for the Conference and for their significant contribution to its outcomes. We would also like to congratulate Australia's Ambassador for the Environment, Penny Wensley, for her role as Chairperson of the Preparatory and Main Committees and for her skill and persistence in achieving constructive outcomes from the Conference.

Important initial steps were taken at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) to make the cogent case that small island developing States are a special case with particular needs with regard to both environment and development. Chapter 17, section G, of Agenda 21 represents those first steps in recognizing the priorities of small island developing States. The Declaration of Barbados and the Programme of Action identify the next steps in putting in place the necessary fabric to secure the future

sustainability of small island developing States. For the island countries of the South Pacific region, climate change and sea-level rise, natural and environmental disasters, coastal and marine management, biodiversity, freshwater, waste management, land, energy and human resource development are keys to their future survival.

A partnership is necessary at all levels — international, regional and national, as well as governmental and non-governmental — to preserve the most important resources of small island developing States: the human, cultural and natural resources. A partnership is necessary to address the ecological fragility and economic vulnerability of small island developing States.

In our view, when the General Assembly adopts the Programme of Action and the accompanying Barbados Declaration, it will still be premature to congratulate ourselves on our achievement. The time for congratulations will come when we have followed through, when we have all made sure that these proposals are converted into effective action. The outcomes of the Conference represent a major step forward, but more steps are necessary in the all-important process of implementation of the Programme of Action. The international community now needs to take these next steps, and we view those steps as the test of the international community's commitment to meeting the goal of sustainable development of small island developing States.

I turn now to actions by South Pacific countries. The island countries of the South Pacific region have not come with empty hands to this partnership of which I spoke a few moments ago. Our forests, our atmospheres, our marine ecosystems and our human resources make an essential contribution to the sustenance and indeed the improvement of the balance of life on our planet.

*Mr. Ntakibirora (Burundi), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

Much has already been done in the South Pacific region to put into effect the commitments undertaken in the Programme of Action. At a national level, a number of initiatives have been taken in order to meet our commitments. These include developing national environmental legislation and national environmental management strategies. At a regional level, the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) plays an invaluable role in coordinating regional action and providing technical and policy advice to the countries of the region. One example of this is the coordination provided by SPREP in the implementation of a regional biodiversity programme funded in part by the pilot phase of the Global Environment Fund.

This level of commitment to the sustainable development of the natural resources of the region was reaffirmed by Heads of Government at the twenty-fifth South Pacific Forum meeting held in Brisbane, Australia, in August of this year. Heads of Government endorsed the Programme of Action emanating from the Conference. They also stressed the importance of effective implementation of the recommendation in the Programme of Action for achieving sustainable development in the region.

A regional mechanism to coordinate and facilitate implementation of the Conference's outcomes, as recommended in paragraph 132 of the Programme of Action, has now been established with the convening of an advisory committee of senior officials and through coordination arrangements between SPREP and the Pacific Operations Centre of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.

Responding to the urgent need to address resource management issues in the region, an unprecedented range of measures was adopted by the Heads of Government at the South Pacific Forum. These include measures to promote sustainable development and environmental protection, including in the areas of climate change and sea-level rise, sustainable management of fisheries and forestry resources, coastal zone management — including coral reefs — biodiversity conservation and management of hazardous and radioactive wastes.

The countries of the South Pacific region consider the Programme of Action to be more than an academic exercise for the region. Rapid and effective responses to achieve sustainable development of the resources are fundamental to the survival of the island countries.

What of actions by the international community? For the reasons already mentioned, it is more important than ever that the international community, the United Nations system and other intergovernmental organizations fully implement and integrate the Programme of Action into the formulation of their priorities, programmes and activities.

It will be critical for the United Nations system and other intergovernmental organizations to coordinate and to cooperate with the small island developing countries,

regional bodies and bilateral donors for access to and optimum use of resources.

An important example of cooperative efforts to further the Programme of Action is in the preparation of two feasibility studies undertaken by the United Nations Development Programme on a small island developing States technical assistance programme (SIDS/TAP) and a small island developing States information network (SIDS/NET). These feasibility studies are a valuable contribution to our deliberations on how further to implement the objectives and outcomes of the Conference. Over the coming weeks, careful consideration must be given to finding a means to further the work contained in the reports and to put those reports into action as soon as possible. It is thus unfortunate that these reports have not been translated and circulated more expeditiously.

There are a number of other practical measures which should be adopted by financial and development institutional agencies, such as the World Bank, the Global Environment Facility and regional development banks, and which will contribute to meeting the commitments and objectives of the Programme of Action. For example, strategies must be developed to assist capacity-building in small island developing States. There would be considerable value in improving the accessibility of the types of assistance available from various institutions and agencies, including through circulating to Governments of small island developing countries and regional organizations clear, detailed and user-friendly guidelines on how funding can be accessed and the purposes to which funding can be applied.

In this context, we welcome the restructuring and replenishment of the Global Environment Facility and its contribution to sustainable development in the South Pacific region. We would welcome the Facility's future efforts to facilitate access to technical and financial resources in support of sustainable development of the South Pacific island countries and to support projects that cover more than one of the four areas of the Facility.

The international community is obliged to pay close attention to monitoring progress on the implementation of the Programme of Action. The outcomes of the Conference, and their implementation, must become fully integrated into the work programme of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development. In accordance with the Conference recommendations, the Commission needs to take a central role in monitoring and reviewing implementation of the Programme of Action. We are confident that appropriate steps will be taken by the Secretariat and the Commission to integrate this new responsibility, in a distinct and identifiable manner, in its future work programme.

To this end, in keeping with the commitments in the Programme of Action, appropriate levels of staffing resources must be focused in the United Nations Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development and dedicated to effectively carrying out the functions and objectives envisaged under the Programme of Action. In our view, these functions can be undertaken effectively only through additional resources, which are to form part of the entity envisaged under the Programme of Action.

We also emphasize paragraph 134 of the Programme of Action, which states that United Nations regional commissions shall implement the Programme of Action at the regional level, providing autonomy and adequate resources to subregional offices and operational centres. In the case of the South Pacific region, the overwhelming need for on-the-ground accessibility to United Nations commissions by small island developing countries is at the sub-regional level.

This statement has made three main points, and I should like to end by emphasizing that they are important and form an integral whole. First, the outcomes from the Barbados Conference are vital in the overall framework for securing sustainable development of small island countries. Secondly, implementation of the Programme of Action is the yardstick against which future actions will be measured. And finally, we urge the international community to meet their commitments under the Programme of Action in order to contribute to the future sustainability of the island countries of the South Pacific region.

**Mr. Keating** (New Zealand): I too should like to begin by joining my delegation's condolences to those of my colleagues who spoke earlier to the Government and people of Egypt at the losses that they have incurred in recent days.

For the South Pacific, one of the most important international events of 1994 was the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. New Zealand has a particular interest in this subject, and we are delighted that the Conference was hosted by one of the members of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS). We should like to express

our thanks and appreciation to the Government and people of Barbados for their generosity in hosting the Conference and in providing such good conference facilities. This proved to be a most appropriate setting for the coming of age of the global community of small island States.

The Barbados Conference was widely viewed as a test of the acceptance, in the wake of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, of global responsibility for sustainable development, recognizing in particular that small islands are grappling with a set of environmental and development challenges that are not necessarily of their own making. Global problems such as marine pollution, climate change and ozone depletion recognize no national boundaries. Nor can the rest of the world ignore the unique contribution of small island developing States to global sustainability, through their rich biodiversity, their vast areas of marine resources and their coral reef ecosystems.

Against that background, the successful conclusion at the Conference of a comprehensive Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Islands represents an enormous achievement. We moved, in the course of a single year, from what was essentially a consciousness-raising exercise to conclude, in Barbados in May 1994, a policy blueprint that specified measures at national, subregional, regional and international levels to support the sustainable development of small islands into the twenty-first century.

Agreement on the Programme of Action has brought us now to a critical stage. We need to ensure that the enormous effort the international community put into the Barbados Conference is carried forward and what we have achieved is not lost. In this statement, I propose to make a few comments about how we, the international community, should now proceed to implement the Programme of Action. Secondly, I wish to touch on specific issues relating to the follow-up to the Barbados Conference that we need to address at this session of the General Assembly.

Primary responsibility for implementation of the Programme rests with the small islands themselves. But, equally, the Programme of Action recognizes that islands cannot make it happen alone. Regional and international efforts in support of small islands are necessary.

The central message is that donor countries and agencies have to recognize in their programmes the priorities of small island developing States. Development assistance should be managed in partnership with recipient Governments and coordinated with other donors, with the Global Conference's Programme of Action always in mind. This partnership is necessary, among other things, to ensure that programmes have the full support of recipient Governments and that they do not place an undue administrative burden on small islands.

As far as New Zealand is concerned, over two-thirds of its development assistance is spent in the small islands of the South Pacific. We are in the process of measuring our objectives and activities against those articulated in the Programme of Action, which will remain an essential programming tool for New Zealand in the coming years.

As recognized in the Programme of Action, strong regional cooperation and robust regional institutions are essential, given the small size of the small islands and the limited financial and human resources available to them. In this regard, in our region crucial roles are played by the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) and by the South Pacific Forum, which brings together each year the 15 Heads of Government of the South Pacific.

As mentioned in the South Pacific Forum statement delivered by the representative of Australia on behalf of the Forum, the countries of the South Pacific agreed last month to establish a specific regional consultative mechanism to coordinate and facilitate implementation of the Barbados outcomes in our region. The Advisory Committee will be made up of SPREP members. These comprise 22 Pacific island States and territories, the two developed countries of the Pacific — Australia and New Zealand, and the three metropolitan Powers with responsibilities in the region: France, the United States and the United Kingdom. Other donor countries, the United Nations and intergovernmental agencies that are active in the Pacific, and the community of non-governmental organizations will be invited to participate in the work of the Advisory Committee. This will provide a wide-ranging participatory process that will act in effect as a sustainable development Commission for the South Pacific. This proposal has our full support. New Zealand strongly believes that the follow-up to the Conference must be a transparent and inclusive process if it is to be effective.

I now turn to the particular responsibilities we have at this session of the General Assembly. First, we need

to direct the various components of the United Nations system to implement the Programme of Action. The report prepared by the Secretariat suggests that many of the key United Nations actors involved in follow-up are still in the process of developing implementation strategies. We urge the United Nations organizations — particularly the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, which are singled out for particular attention in the Programme of Action — to give higher priority to this task.

It will be the responsibility of the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development to ensure that United Nations agencies play their part. The Inter-Agency Committee should be transparent in its reporting, identifying clearly where any problems lie, so that appropriate follow-up action can be taken by Member States. As outlined in the Programme of Action, intergovernmental monitoring of its implementation will be primarily through the Commission on Sustainable Development.

Secondly, we need to agree on United Nations Secretariat support arrangements appropriate to the combined tasks of ensuring effective follow-up to the Programme of Action and serving as liaison and an information point for small islands on issues relevant to small islands under discussion in the United Nations, including climate change.

New Zealand favours a dedicated unit within the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development. This concept is already implicit, we believe, in the provision made in the Programme of Action for a separate and identifiable entity. If resources are dispersed throughout the Department, we fear that small islands will lose access and the system will lose accountability.

New Zealand also believes that staffing levels must be realistic in terms of the broad range of tasks identified in the Programme. We strongly support the view of the Association of Small Island States (AOSIS) that appointments to the regional commissions of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) must be made at the subregional level if we are to maximize the responsiveness of these Commissions to local and subregional concerns. I should like to stress this point in particular in relation to the South Pacific region. There is already a subregional body located in the area, the ESCAP Pacific Operations Centre in Vanuatu. This is obviously the appropriate body to act as the coordinating point for the United Nations in the South Pacific. New Zealand envisages that with a modest boost in staff resources that regional Centre will be able to work with SPREP in fulfilling the mandate of the Barbados Conference.

At this session of the General Assembly, we should also give initial consideration to feasibility studies that have been prepared by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on a small island developing States information network (SIDS/NET) and a small island developing States technical assistance programme (SIDS/TAP). These two proposals were called for in the Programme of Action and relate to the development of an information network and a directory of institutions and scholars with expertise in the sustainable development of small islands. The two proposals are linked and should be considered together.

We should like to congratulate the UNDP for its prompt completion of comprehensive feasibility studies on SIDS/TAP and SIDS/NET. The studies canvas a number of options for carrying forward the two proposals. These will now need to be considered in detail. We endorse the initial premise of the feasibility studies — namely, that programmes should be non-duplicative and build on existing technical assistance programmes and information networks. In addition, as recognized in the studies, the programmes will be managed and sustained by small islands themselves once we get beyond the initial start-up phase.

Against this background, there is scope for further refinement of the SIDS/NET proposal in particular. The question of costs and of necessary resource reallocation is obviously important, both for small islands and for donors. The study notes that local needs and circumstances may affect cost projections and recommends that individual or possibly subregional feasibility studies now be done to determine specific solutions.

These stage-two feasibility studies may provide an opportunity for necessary refinements. In particular, we would support a greater emphasis on training and education and the possible extension of the implementation timetable, taking into account services which may already be available to some individual small islands.

Finally, we believe that the Barbados Conference successfully completed its work. The international community now has a comprehensive Programme of Action laid out before it. The test for all of us is whether we will live up to the commitments we have made. The presence of large numbers of small island States in the United Nations is an important guarantee of this. But all other Members of this Organization must pledge their support, mindful that our Charter commits us to cooperation in dealing with the economic and social problems which confront the global community. The consensus achieved at the Barbados Conference shows that this partnership does work.

**Mrs. Fréchette** (Canada): First of all, my delegation would like to join other speakers in extending its condolences to the Government and the people of Egypt on their tragic losses in the recent flooding.

*(spoke in French)*

My delegation welcomes the successful conclusion of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. The Conference is the first effort to apply the lessons of Rio to specific countries. It is a model of how we can make Agenda 21 operational and adapt it to a particular set of circumstances.

It has often been said that small island States — because of their richness and isolation — are a microcosm of the world. What was certainly highlighted during the Conference in Barbados is that small island developing States face a unique environmental and developmental situation: ecological wealth and fragility; close interdependence of ecology and the economy; vulnerability in the event of natural disasters, climate change and rising sea-levels; an absence of economies of scale; geographic isolation; population pressures; limited resources; and isolation from international markets.

*(spoke in English)*

Canada is proud to have played a constructive and energetic role in the Conference, contributing in excess of $300,000 to the Conference and its related activities. Throughout the negotiations, we were optimistic that we would reach agreement and we share the satisfaction of the international community on the results. My delegation would like to thank the other countries involved, especially Barbados, for the time and effort taken to bring about a successful conclusion and for being such a gracious host.

Canada would also like to thank the members of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) for the leadership they displayed in the organization of the Conference, alerting the world to the dangers of inaction and in bringing to the international community an enhanced understanding of the challenges they face.

The Programme of Action and Declaration give us road maps for securing the future of small island developing States. To get there, however, we will need to follow through and carry out the actions envisaged. Canada is committed to doing so and has a long history of cooperative ties with small island States, particularly in the Caribbean. In 1995, Canada will contribute between $30 million and $40 million to developing island States in the Caribbean to assist in efforts aimed at environment management and protection and to help build capacity in enhancing economic competition.

We look forward to cooperating with our island partners on the implementation of the important outcomes of this Conference.

**Mr. Slade** (Samoa): I would like to start with an expression to the delegation of Egypt of the warm feelings and sympathy of my delegation on the loss of life and the destruction caused by floods in their country.

Samoa welcomes most warmly the successful conclusion of the Global Conference held in Barbados earlier this year; and we want to take advantage of this further opportunity to thank and to congratulate all who worked hard in producing the Declaration of Barbados and the Programme of Action that were adopted.

Our own perspective on this subject centres on the historic work of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), for the case for a global conference to concentrate on the sustainable development of small island developing States was established in Rio. There was a need to make that case because of the known vulnerabilities of small island developing States and because by any global measure they are a special priority for international action.

The particular importance of Barbados was that, for the first time, small States engaged the international community in an informed dialogue to map out the scope and priorities of the development of their islands and environment. What we now have in the Programme of Action is a comprehensive path to sustainable development. It contains the perspective not of one, but

of many; not of a region, but of the international community.

Truly, it is a blueprint for a global effort, incorporating the very realistic and very practical tripartite approach of national, regional and international actions. It is a call to arms, above all, to national Governments on the basis of domestic initiative and self-reliance predicated on the need for international assistance and cooperation. It defines not merely the agreed priority areas for environmental and development planning but is, assuredly, a Programme of Action. It provides an opportunity for the international community to demonstrate its commitment to the means of implementation adopted in Agenda 21.

Effective implementation, monitoring and review of the Programme of Action is absolutely essential for the sustainable development of small island developing States. It is the true test of commitment. Otherwise, we put at risk the very considerable effort and input we have all invested in the Barbados Global Conference and in the preparatory process that went before it. And we would echo what the Secretary-General said in this Hall, in another but similar context, that the failure of implementation would render meaningless the historic accords and programmes of action so diligently and expertly produced.

For our part, Samoa, in consultation with donor partners and appropriate United Nations agencies, is progressing towards finalizing national proposals to build on the Programme of Action and to guide donor activities and resources. A national Environment Management Plan is already in place to complement regional and international strategies.

Like many other small island States, our Government and non-governmental groups are consciously devoting extensive time and resources to our efforts to contribute to the current United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, as well as to the ongoing negotiations on implementation of the law of the sea, biodiversity and climate change Conventions. We were similarly involved in the Conferences held in Rio, Barbados and Cairo.

While we recognize the need to sustain our efforts, we must warn of the severe blow to the post-Rio optimism that we fear will be induced by the absence of concrete commitment on the part of the international community.

In negotiations on the Programme of Action, and since then, we have been told to explore existing financial resources within the United Nations system to implement it. And this comes at a time when our Organization is facing serious resource constraints impacting on the abilities of Governments to carry out programme activities. It is a response that does not readily generate confidence among the small island States. From our perspective, what existing financial resources are in fact there? And how should small island developing States effectively and realistically tap into these existing financial resources? How, indeed, in the context of the Programme of Action we are now discussing, should the United Nations address the question of development resources management and effective programme delivery and implementation?

We are grateful to the Secretary-General for his report in document A/49/425 and Add.1, setting out the action taken by the organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system to implement the Programme of Action. My own delegation believes that a number of essential and practical measures would need to be taken — some of which could be taken now — if the objectives and outcomes of the Barbados Conference are to be realized. These include the need to streamline United Nations operations to ensure that scarce resources are put to their best use. We also think that administrative costs should be minimized, with priority given to programme activities. Equally, we think that the United Nations should take the initiative and work more closely with its specialized bodies, regional organizations and other non-United-Nations organizations to minimize duplication of development activities.

Also, a more focused and effective Commission on Sustainable Development is, of course, vital in the monitoring of all post-Rio outcomes, including the Barbados Programme of Action, which must be fully integrated into the work of the Commission. At the forthcoming session of the Commission, the particular concerns of small island developing States in forestry and in sustainable agriculture should be given close attention. We are in no doubt that less bureaucratic, and more effective global funding mechanisms, such as the Global Environmental Facility, are essential. Furthermore, additional resources would be needed in the event that the Facility becomes the sole global financial mechanism for the environment and for the Conventions on biodiversity, climate change and desertification.

We agree with the representative of India, who said this morning that appropriate arrangements must be made at the international level to assist and improve trade

arrangements for small island developing countries in redressing adverse effects on their export capacities and earnings.

In the long term, more United Nations resources should gradually be diverted from peace-keeping to development activities. At the same time, national military budgets, which normally are large components of foreign aid assistance, would need to be reduced.

But let me say it again — as much to my own country as for others: a key ingredient of the Barbados Programme of Action is the need to match donor assistance with sound and responsible domestic policies. The management of resources is a theme to which Samoa and its regional neighbours in the Pacific have committed themselves in order to protect and to preserve what few resources we have.

My delegation greatly appreciates the two studies undertaken by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) pursuant to paragraphs 105 and 106 of the Programme of Action, namely the study for the implementation of a Small Island Developing States Information Network (SIDS/NET), and the study on a Small Island Developing States Technical Assistance Programme (SIDS/TAP) to promote interregional and intra-regional cooperation on sustainable development. We congratulate UNDP particularly for the prompt and expert action taken, but more so for the manner of its undertaking: the full consultation; the utilization of existing structures; the emphasis on capacity-improvement; and the attention given to the requirements for suitability, efficiency and self-reliance. This is a *modus operandi*, or the ingredients of one, for effective implementation, and we would commend it for the general implementation of the Programme of Action. I should acknowledge that there are features of the studies that may require further discussion. My own delegation would wish to participate in any consultations for that purpose.

I also thank UNDP for the "Capacity 21" initiative and for the Pacific Human Resource Programme being undertaken in our region. Our hope, of course, is that these programmes will fully take into account our circumstances and assist with the implementation of our national environmental management strategies.

Samoa notes with appreciation from the Secretary-General's report (A/49/425 and Add.1) the work being undertaken by various United Nations bodies to help small island States cope with the threats of climate change and of sea-level rise. This is a subject of the gravest concern to my country and to all small islands. A whole chapter of the Programme of Action, significantly the first chapter, is devoted to it. Our concerns are manifold, serious and urgent; they have been expressed many times before, here and elsewhere. Small islands are now experiencing increasingly frequent immediate impacts from cyclones, storms and hurricanes associated with changing weather patterns, their effects causing major setbacks to economic development. The fear of climate change and sea-level rise is real.

But we are also concerned about the commitments made in Rio, more particularly the obligation undertaken by the Annex I parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change to take the lead in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. My own Government, together with other island States of our region, and as a member of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), has consistently called for further and significant steps to be taken by the Annex I countries to reduce their emission of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases. For reasons that we all know, the responsibility for aversion and for containment in this matter lies very largely with the industrialized countries.

That is why we, the small island developing States, have sought to address this concern through the draft protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change on greenhouse gas emissions reduction. The purpose and core provision of the draft protocol is to secure new commitments on the part of the industrialized countries to decrease their emissions of greenhouse gases by at least 20 per cent by the year 2005. Small islands are seeking to do this on the basis of available scientific evidence. It is acknowledged that the scientific evidence is not clear cut. However, as related by the Secretary-General in his report on agenda item 89 (b) (A/49/485), it was stressed by the Chairman of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for Framework Convention on Climate Change at the Committee's tenth session that the slow response of the climate system to measures to address climate change argues not for delay but for action now, despite the scientific uncertainty that may exist.

My own delegation would stress that the draft protocol submitted is not a distraction, but is a serious effort on the part of the small island States, in line with the outcomes of the Barbados Conference, to strengthen commitments under the climate change Convention and

to demand of the industrialized countries the action that is needed now and which they alone can meaningfully take.

The Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States has the potential to guide, in a sustainable development approach, our national development plans for the next two decades and beyond. To achieve success, and for its global application, the Programme must itself be sustainable. It needs the cooperation and the support of all of us to ensure this.

**Mr. Mabilangan** (Philippines): The Philippine delegation associates itself with the expressions of sympathy to Egypt offered by the President, by the Chairman of the Group of 77 and by other speakers. The Philippines is itself prone to natural disasters, so we understand fully the plight of the affected people of Egypt.

The Philippines associates itself with the statement of the Chairman of the Group of 77 on the matter the Assembly is discussing this morning.

It is difficult to think of the great work of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) and of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island States without feeling a sense of gratitude to a diplomat and gentleman who did so much for AOSIS and the Barbados process — the former Ambassador of Vanuatu, Robert Van Lierop.

The Philippines also congratulates Ambassador Penelope Wensley of Australia for her masterly guidance of the preparations for the Global Conference. We thank the Government and people of Barbados for their hospitality and their excellent organization of the historic event.

The Philippines, an archipelago of more than 7,100 small islands, understands the problems of small island States and shares many of their concerns.

The commercialized image of the small island as paradise is often misleading. The truth is that many of the small island States are no longer self-sufficient hideaways from the active world. According to John Donne:

> "No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a part of the main".

Today, we could say: no island is an island complete in itself; every island forms part of the world.

The islands of the world have been invaded by ideas and images from the outside world — by artifacts and artifices, techniques and technologies, longings and desires which once were alien to them. The islands have themselves ventured beyond their coastlines, and they have had to face a highly competitive milieu.

This has been difficult. Most of them must cram to master ways — developed over generations — of technical discovery, innovation, refinement and usage. Though no longer isolated, many of them remain remote from international ship lanes. When their populations exceed comfortable density ratios, their resources are severely taxed. But when, on the contrary, their people are too few, their production capabilities cannot benefit from economies of scale. Much too often, their imports far exceed their exports and their core export commodities are vulnerable to price fluctuations beyond their control.

Constrained in manufacturing and trading, they invite tourists to share in the beauty of their land and waters. But more often than not, foreign visitors have spoiled their beaches, shorn their forests, polluted their waters — and for so little, since wholesale tour operators, foreign carriers and suppliers have amassed fortunes at their expense.

The small developing islands, fragile and vulnerable, are caught in a dilemma born of paradox. They are vulnerable to the onslaughts of the same nature which has made them bountiful in flora and fauna. Storms and typhoons, hurricanes and cyclones devastate them. Volcanic eruptions — which had once made them emerge from the bowels of the earth — terrorize them; earthquakes and tidal waves overwhelm them.

But it is not only to the vagaries of nature that the islands are vulnerable. They are also victims of the carelessness and indifference of man. The warming of the globe, which inexorably raises sealevels, threatening to submerge the Marshalls, the Maldives and many other places, can be traced to man's injudicious use of elements which emit greenhouse gases. The pollution which destroys coral reefs and depletes marine life can be traced to man's carelessness in waste disposal, in handling toxic or hazardous substances.

The small islands are also vulnerable to the political and economic contests of bigger nations. How many of them have been the staging areas for nuclear experiments or for the storage of radioactive substances? How many

of the islands have received their just share from the commercial exploitation of their diverse plant and animal life used by biogenetic experts and bioengineers to produce new life forms or products commanding high prices?

The task we face is how to make these islands less vulnerable. We may not be able to hold back the wrath of nature. But we may learn to forecast its changes of temper, take appropriate preventive measures and thus minimize the adverse impact on life and property. Regional and subregional networking of early-warming systems and relief mechanisms could be bolstered with international support. Regional and sub-regional arrangements, with international assistance, could be made to obtain more comprehensive and cost-effective insurance packages.

More important, we must manifest our collective resolve to control our own injudiciousness and imprudence in the use of substances which lead to global warming, in the handling of hazardous materials, in making use of the islands and their seas as nuclear laboratories.

The problems of the small islands also challenge other developing countries. Natural disasters, pollution of air and water, vanishing forests, drought, land erosion and desertification, and depletion of coastal and marine resources also afflict other developing countries. Market barriers, onerous terms of trade and external debt, shortage of financial resources and inequitable distribution of income: all these have often troubled other developing countries.

But among developing countries in general, as among the small island States in particular, some are more vulnerable — either to specific environmental and economic problems or, by some quirk of fortune, to all problems. There are, therefore, many good reasons for the formulation of vulnerability indices for nations.

We believe that the Conference achieved at least two things: first, a more profound respect for the positive cultural values and traditional strengths of the islands, proceeding from a symbiotic relationship with nature as well as a realization of the fortifying role of families and small communities of elders, of women, of youth and of children in island societies; and, secondly, a marshalling of international support to develop the national capacities of the islands — those capacities which proceed not only from their indigenous and traditional cultures but also, and more particularly, from what they have learned and obtained from other cultures and traditions, in order that they may be able to formulate policies and implement them more effectively in their pursuit of economic growth and sustainable development.

Our expectations of the Barbados Conference, in line with key points of Rio, were: deeper appreciation of the right to development; provision of adequate financing; and facilitation of technology transfer.

Our expectations and the Conference's achievements are linked to the most important resource of the islands — and, indeed, of all nations: the human resource, the person, who is at the centre of all development effort. No matter how exquisite nature has made the islands, it is the person who remains the source of all wonder. He remains the prime agent as well as the principal beneficiary of his island's destiny.

The developing world watched to see how willing the international community — particularly the more affluent countries and the multilateral financial institutions — was to assist the small islands. For the islands were a test case, as it were, to confirm the commitments of Rio, particularly in the Rio Declaration and in Agenda 21. What would be done for the small developing islands by the world community — apart from reminding them of what they themselves could do and should do — would prefigure what could be done for other developing countries.

We were aware of the fact that financial resources are not infinite, that developing countries cannot perpetually rely on external aid flows; but we sought an intelligent understanding of the specific vulnerabilities of certain groups of developing countries, so that these could be addressed not only with goodwill but also with an intelligent allocation of resources where they were most needed. For what benefits a group of nations, in terms of environmental protection and sustainable development, also benefits the world. There is an intimate linkage between sustainable development and the continued health of our planet.

Negotiations on the Barbados Declaration and on the Programme of Action — particularly on provisions related to the international implementation aspects of finance, to trade, to the transfer of environmentally sound technologies and to institutional arrangements — were intense. Both documents testify to the world enthusiasm that was evident in Barbados.

There will be need for effective, action-oriented follow-up and follow-through of our agreements and

declarations. Only in this way may future generations be able to say that we did not work in vain; only in this way can we keep the spirit of Barbados a vibrant paradigm of that cooperation which will maintain the Earth as a fruitful haven for future generations.

**Mr. Leung** (Fiji): On behalf of the people and the Government of Fiji, I should like to join previous speakers in expressing my deep sympathy to the Government and the people of Egypt on the sad loss of life that resulted from the recent floods.

I am honoured to be able to intervene at this time to speak on an issue of great relevance and interest to Fiji and to my region, the South Pacific.

As a small island developing State, Fiji was pleased, along with other countries, to have participated in the United Nations Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States recently held in Barbados. We would happily associate ourselves with those delegations which have already offered their congratulations to the people and the Government of Barbados for their organizational skills and hospitality during the Conference.

The discussion of this item in the Assembly now is a good time to take stock. Looking back at the Conference, it is appropriate to ask what it achieved and whether it opened up any new opportunities for small island States. While there was general agreement among many small States on the need to assist each other with advice and expertise, there is a real sense that when all the rhetoric is analysed, little in the way of new financial resources and help has been promised to the small island developing countries as a result of the Conference. Recalling the compact at Rio only two and half years ago between the world's rich and poor countries, the sincerity regarding the early attainment of some of the commitments that were made at the Earth Summit is now increasingly being called into question. One is tempted to ask, in light of the apparent inertia of some developed States in providing greater evidence of their commitments, whether they are serious about the achievement of sustainable development goals by smaller island countries, including developing ones. History will not judge the success of the Barbados Conference on the number of statements that were made or the number of delegations that attended. It will look to examine what in the way of meaningful commitments and practical outcomes have been achieved as a result of it. In all frankness, I think we must acknowledge that a significant view has emerged that overall, the Conference was not the success it could have been.

While we welcome the continued recognition that the unique economic and geographical characteristics of small island developing States accord them a status deserving of special attention, recognition of itself will not solve the underlying problems. This is not an attention that we have voluntarily sought. Rather, it has been foisted upon us by an accident of nature, by the vagaries of the world climate system and by the past industrial and technological production processes of some developed States which ignored fundamental principles related to the sustainability of the environment. It is a historical truism that island developing States, while not responsible for this state of affairs, are nevertheless, because of their smallness, continued environmental victims of these past excesses.

But the Barbados Conference did have valuable and constructive outcomes, and we would readily recognize them. We welcome the initiatives that have been taken by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on the Small Island Developing States Technical Assistance Programme (SIDS/TAP) and the information network SIDS/NET, and we join other countries in congratulating UNDP on the expeditious completion of these studies. There is much potential benefit for small island developing States in these initiatives, and we look forward to their early fruition.

We also believe, for example, that the Declaration of Barbados and the accompanying Programme of Action are significant achievements in themselves. Taken together, they can serve as a blueprint for enabling small island developing States, when appropriately assisted, to realize the goals of sustainable development. They also serve as a timely reminder to the international community that the environmental challenges and problems of small island developing States must continue to remain high on the international agenda. They will not and must not disappear.

We must now continue to ensure that greater effort is made to implement the Programme of Action. In this regard, it will be a test of the political will and resolve of the richer industrialized countries to the sustainable development of small island developing States to respond to the invitation before them to facilitate the early delivery of assistance that would lend meaning to the hopes kindled at Rio and energized in Barbados.

Fiji shares the concerns and frustrations of an increasing number of developing countries, including small island States, that although significant progress has been made in a number of areas, much more remains to be done in the area of sustainable development. In particular, it is the view of my delegation that universal agreement on the transfer of environmentally sound technology, endogenous capacity-building and human resource development and the establishment of additional funding mechanisms are just some of the areas in which developed countries could usefully assist island countries to better achieve the goals contained in the Declaration, as well as the Programme of Action. At the national level, Fiji has established a National Environment Strategy which encompasses a number of projects. These include the development of environmental impact assessment legislation and the establishment of a spatially referenced national environmental database to integrate the results of both terrestrial and marine resource surveys. All in all, 14 projects have been identified under this Strategy. We think that these are areas which could benefit from the kind of partnerships envisaged under Agenda 21.

We believe that the identification of a number of agreed priority areas in the Programme of Action as a basis for future action is useful. We should now continue to ensure that discussions on this remain action-oriented. Many small island developing countries are separated by long distances from the forums where environmental issues affecting them are discussed. They often cannot afford the expense associated with participation in these processes. In this connection, therefore, my delegation applauds initiatives such as voluntary funds, established for example, in relation to the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks. We appreciate the contributions made by a number of countries to the fund, and thank them for their generosity in this regard. We believe that the concept of the fund could be applied with equal success to other environmental conferences and processes. However, there is a need to ensure the effective participation in and efficient convening of meetings affecting small island States.

We sometimes feel that our concerns and aspirations are often overlooked because of our smallness and lack of political visibility. We therefore welcome the positive assurances by the United States, the European Union and others, of support for the implementation of the Programme of Action. I would also refer to the comments made this morning by the representative who spoke on behalf of the European Union concerning the setting aside of a significant amount of money for a period ending next year to assist the sustainable development efforts of small States and would encourage and thank the members of the European Union in this regard.

My delegation supports the suggestion that the Commission on Sustainable Development might play a valuable and supportive role in the entire small-island-developing-States process. We believe that the Commission might be the right vehicle for engaging developed and small island developing States to establish the kind of coalition that could explore specific modalities to implement the Programme of Action. On a related note, we also support recent sentiments that the multitude of international processes related to the environment and sustainable-development efforts will need to be rationalized to eliminate duplication. We look forward, as a small island State, to the finalization of the policy options and financial instruments and mechanisms under consideration by the Commission for Sustainable Development and other United Nations bodies. Greater transparency in the deliberations and processes of the Commission would enable the views and interests of small island developing States to be taken into consideration during those processes.

While there has been some progress following Rio and consolidation of ground at Barbados, much more still needs to be achieved. However, we would like to thank our friends in the international community who continue to help us towards the attainment of sustainable development goals. We look forward to the opportunity to engage in a dialogue on the forms of any possible future assistance with those developed States that have come to our help in the past. I have already identified a number of areas which would be ripe for partnership in this regard.

In conclusion, our special plea is that small island developing States have special vulnerabilities and deserve an equally urgent attention. This should not be forgotten. We recognize that the post-cold-war international order has necessarily brought about a shift in emphasis for some of the larger developed States, resulting in a reordering of spending priorities in favour of economies in transition. We have no quarrels with that. Indeed, we are entirely supportive of those efforts. However, as a small island developing State our commitment to sustainable development goals will remain undiminished. We will of course continue to carry a major responsibility for the achievement of national objectives in the areas of environment and sustainable development efforts. We will continue to marshal available resources towards those

objectives, but we cannot do this alone and unaided. We therefore look to our global partners in national development to join us in a cooperative effort as we strive to achieve these objectives. We are in this compact together, and worldwide sustainability will be threatened if we do not assist poorer island developing countries attain a level of development that takes into account their environmental concerns.

In the final analysis, although the Barbados Conference was a qualified success, the international community must now rededicate itself to the goals that led to that Conference, and for the world's richer countries to honour the promises they have made to help smaller and ecologically fragile ones. Many of us have had dreams since Rio. Many of us had our hopes and expectations raised at that Summit. We now owe it to the future generations of mankind to ensure the realization those dreams.

**Mr. Chew** (Singapore): I should first like to express my delegation's condolences to the delegation of Egypt on the loss of life in that country as a result of the recent floods and fire.

The Earth Summit at Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States in Barbados this year underscored how critical development and protection of the environment are for developing countries, particularly the small island developing States. At those Conferences the international community recognized the problems peculiar to small island developing States. While such States suffer from the same constraints in their developmental process as all other developing countries, they are further disadvantaged by special vulnerability factors.

It is worth our while to take a few minutes to remind ourselves of the special vulnerability factors that confront small island developing States. First, they are, more likely than not, inaccessibly located in the middle of large oceans. Isolation, with poor communications and transportation links to the rest of the world, exacerbates the problems of economic development for small island developing States. In his book, *Meditations of a Parish Priest*, Joseph Roux correctly summed it up in 1886 when he wrote that "solitude vivifies, isolation kills".

Secondly, small island developing States often comprise more than one island. These components parts are themselves often separated by vast stretches of sea, making administration and control extremely difficult. To comprehend this problem of separation, let me refer to Robert Louis Stevenson, who wandered around the Pacific in the late nineteenth century. He said that the sea "is a horrible place" and that sailing the seas was "stupefying to the mind and poisonous to the temper".

Thirdly, small island developing countries often have very small populations, which inhibits economic growth since they lack economies of scale. Fourthly, the lack of natural resources makes development even more daunting for small island developing States.

Fifthly, tourism tends to be the only economically viable industry. Isolated islands have long been celebrated for their beauty in novels by writers such as Melville, Somerset Maugham, Mark Twain, Stevenson and Michener, and by painters like Gauguin. However, tourism, if not carefully managed, will eventually destroy the beauty and fine ecological balance of small island developing States.

In Barbados earlier this year the international community adopted the Barbados Declaration and the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. It is crucial for the international community to follow through with the implementation of the Programme of Action. Unless this is done, the plight of these island developing States will worsen and their chances of survival decrease significantly. While we are all aware of the economic difficulties in the industrialized world, those problems pale when seen in the light of the problems in the developing countries. The implementation of Agenda 21, and in particular of the Barbados Programme of Action, will reflect the political will and commitment by the industrialized States to achieve sustainable development.

At Barbados it also became apparent that any follow-up to the Conference and the implementation of the Programme of Action would require strong United Nations Secretariat support. In his report (A/49/425 and Add.1) the Secretary-General has indicated that consideration was being given the issue of making available the resources necessary to establish the entity We would like to emphasize the importance of a speedy establishment of the entity and to ensure that sufficient resources are made available. Failure to do so would lead at best to delays in the implementation of the Programme of Action and, at worst, to consigning it to the back burner.

Singapore is convinced that substantial human, financial and other resources can be made available from within the existing and future regular budgets of the United Nations to establish the competent entity within the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development of the United Nations Secretariat. We note that similar efforts are being undertaken for human rights programmes. The linkage between development and human rights is explicitly recognized by the international community in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. It is our hope that the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action will help small island developing States to promote social progress and better standards of living in larger freedom and to achieve the promotion of the economic and social advancement of their peoples as provided in the Preamble to the Charter.

**Agenda item 103**

**Programme of activities of the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People: report of the Third Committee (A/49/613)**

**The President** (*interpretation from French*): If there is no proposal under rule 66 of the rules of procedure, I shall take it that the General Assembly decides not to discuss the report of the Third Committee that is before it today.

*It was so decided.*

**The President** (*interpretation from French*): Statements will therefore be limited to explanations of vote.

The positions of delegations regarding the recommendations of the Third Committee have been made clear in the Committee and are reflected in the relevant official records.

May I remind members that under paragraph 7 of decision 34/401 the General Assembly agreed that

> "When the same draft resolution is considered in a Main Committee and in plenary meeting, a delegation should, as far as possible, explain its vote only once, i.e., either in the Committee or in plenary meeting unless that delegation's vote in plenary meeting is different from its vote in the Committee."

May I also remind delegations that, also in accordance with General Assembly decision 34/401, explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Before we begin to take action on the recommendation contained in the report of the Third Committee, I should like to advise representatives that we are going to proceed to take a decision in the same manner as was done in the Third Committee.

The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft decision recommended by the Third Committee in paragraph 5 of its report (document A/49/613).

The draft decision, entitled "Opening of the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People", was adopted by the Third Committee. May I consider that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

*The draft decision was adopted.*

**The President** (*interpretation from French*): I should like to inform delegations that the General Assembly will observe the opening of the International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples on Thursday, 8 December 1994.

We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 103.

*The meeting rose at 1.25 p.m.*